

## A GOOD-BYE.

Ten years have I lived in this bloom-circled place—  
This home which the arms of the orchard embrace.  
Ten summers of breezes, and blossoms, and rain,  
Of sun-flavored berries and sun-gilded grain.  
Ten ice-girdled winters in ermine robes dressed—  
Ten autumns—ten springs by soft showers caressed.  
Now, ere from its sheltering bosom I fly,  
I must say to each nook of my home—good-bye!  
To the orchard, whose low spreading bows on my head,  
Like a priest's benediction their blossoms have shed;  
To the dream-haunted river, whose still waters lie,  
Chained down by ice fetters beneath the gray sky;  
To its winter-wrought mantle of glistening snow—  
To its ripples that flashed in the midsummer glow.  
Good-bye to the boat that its bosom has pressed;  
Good-bye to the lilies it lulled on its breast.  
To the oaks and the maples, the hemlocks and pines—  
The dainty spring blossoms and bitter-sweet vines.  
Now fast in the steam giant's power I fly:  
O home, 'mid the gray-ruined orchards, good-bye!  
—M. Lillian Thompson, in *Good Housekeeping*.

## RATTLESNAKES.

What Old Simon Kent Knows About Them.

Friends of His, But Not to Be Trusted—His Eleven-Year-Old Pet—What They Will Eat and the Fatality of Their Bite.

"Yes," said Simon Kent, the "rattlesnake king" of Clinton County, whose home is near the headquarters of Paddy's Run, in this township, "I think I know a few things about rattlesnakes. I ought to. I've lived next door neighbor to them for forty years. They're friends of mine, but I wouldn't trust one of them a single second if he was in reach of me."

Kent and a sixteen-year-old son live alone in the woods. The father is a man of intelligence, but spends most of his time in capturing rattlesnakes, which are abundant in his locality. He has sometimes as many as two hundred of these venomous reptiles in captivity at one time. He supplies side-shows and museums with live rattlers, and he has quite a trade in tanned rattlesnake skins, which are used extensively by manufacturers of fancy articles. He also sells large quantities of rattlesnake oil, faith in its efficacy as a liniment being general throughout this part of Pennsylvania.

"I've got a rattlesnake at home," continued the rattlesnake king, "that I have had for eleven years. I raised him from the time he was three inches long, and I think the world of him, but he's got his fangs in, and I know that he would just as leave sock them into me as into any thing else. I call him Nicodemus. I have learned a good deal about rattlesnakes in my long experience with them, but I have discovered more things about them through Nicodemus than in any other way. Among other things, I have found that the rattlesnake changes its skin twice a year—in July and September—and that if they can't get to water while they're shedding their skin it will come off slowly and in pieces, instead of peeling off in one whole piece from head to tail. But I've never caught onto just how they get the skin off. I've gone to bed at night and left Nicodemus without his showing any more sign of peeling himself than if he'd been a stick of wood, but in the morning his old clothes would be lying in one corner of the cage, and he would be as bright as an old-fashioned patch-work quilt in his new ones.

"It is the general impression that when a rattlesnake is shedding his skin he gets blind. There is no mistake that his eyes do get covered with a film at that time, but just put a mouse in his cage and see how quick he'll coil up and send for it, and hit it in the neck every time. A rattlesnake always strikes for the neck, and he always strikes his prey before he eats it; but you may fill his cage with rats, or mice, or frogs, or any thing else he likes, and he'll never touch one of them unless he's hungry. He kills only enough for one meal, and when that is swallowed any thing and every thing that's left can crawl over him, jump on him and tumble him around as much as it pleases and he'll never say 'boo.' The rattlesnake is not a wanton destroyer, nor is he a glutton. Two mice will make him an ample meal. I had my pet rattlesnake ten months before he ate a mouthful or drank a drop of any thing. A rattlesnake has been known to remain fourteen months in captivity without eating or drinking, and then all of a sudden begin to find his appetite. When I put Nicodemus in his cage at the age of ten months I put a young dove in with him. Now there isn't any thing on the earth or in the air that a rattlesnake won't kill and eat if he's hungry, and—"

"Except bats, pop," interrupted the rattlesnake king's sunburned boy.  
"Oh, yes, except bats," assented the king. "I put a bat in Nicodemus'

cage once and I thought he'd go crazy. He coiled himself up in one corner of his cage and actually hid his head. All he'd do was rattle. I was afraid the bat would scare the snake to death, so I took it out of the cage. I put the dove in the cage with Nicodemus just to see what he would do. That dove lived with the snake five years. I've often seen it and Nicodemus asleep together. Sometimes the bird being perched on the snake, and sometimes wrapped up in its coils. At the same time the snake was killing birds, mice, young rabbits and other things right along, as its appetite called for. One day the dove got its head through one of the meshes in the woven wire of the cage, and before it was discovered the poor bird was choked to death like a pheasant in a snare. I got another one so nearly like the dead dove that no one could have told 'em apart. When Nicodemus was asleep I put the bird in his cage. The snake woke up along in the afternoon. He had hardly got his eyes open when he sprang at the dove like a flash of lightning and made his supper off of her. He knew she wasn't his old friend that died.

"There is no telling how long an animal will live after being struck by a rattlesnake, and it may not die at all. I have known a rat to die within six minutes after Nicodemus set its fangs in its neck, and have known one, again, to live more than a day after being struck. I turned a little bantam hen into Nicodemus' cage one day, and when he struck her it made her so mad that she drove him into a corner bleeding like a stuck pig. I was afraid this excited little fowl would kill him, and I took her out as soon as I could. She keeled over an hour afterwards, and I supposed, of course, she was done for, with all that rattlesnake poison in her, but she lived three days in a stupor and then gradually got well. That was the only instance I ever knew of any thing recovering from the bite of a rattlesnake without being treated for the poisoning."

"Except hogs, pop," interjected the rattlesnake king's son once more.

"Oh, yes, except hogs," replied the father. "Lord! yes. Hogs don't mind rattlesnakes any more than I mind flies. I had an old sow once—do you mind old Jennie, Bob?"—that was a regular terror to rattlesnakes. She could find the trail of one as surely as a hound can find the deer's track, and she'd follow that trail till she came up with the snake that made it, and then the rattler was her meat. She didn't seem to care for any other kind of snake, but she'd hunt rattlers from the beginning of the season till the end. If I could have taught that pig to retrieve she'd have been worth a good deal to me, for the number of snakes she'd have brought in during the season would have been immense; but she wasn't on the retrieve. She was hunting for her own accommodation, and ate every snake she caught, leaving only the head. I used to find so many rattlesnake heads on my tours through the woods that it began to dawn on me that my old sow was working dead against me by destroying the snake crop, and I was finally forced to kill her for my own protection.

"I have tried the effect of Nicodemus' bite on many different animals and birds, and with the exception of the bantam and a cur dog that I experimented on, every one of them died, some very soon after being bitten, and some not until three or four days had passed. I am sorry to say that Nicodemus has a record of one man, too, on his list of victims. As a general thing, I do not believe that the bite of a rattlesnake will result fatally to human beings, but it did in this case. The man's name was Flint, and it was all his own fault that he was bitten. He was one of those over-courageous, smart fellows, who think they can do any thing. He was at my place one day and got to teasing the snake. Finally he poked his finger through one of the meshes of the wire at Nicodemus. When a rattlesnake strikes it never misses its mark if what it strikes at is within reach. There is no movement in the world quicker than a rattlesnake's strike. The snake struck at Flint's finger and, of course, hit it. In two hours the man was dead. I hadn't a drop of whisky in the house, and before it was possible to send and get some Flint was dead.

"A human being seems to be the only creature that suffers pain from a rattlesnake's bite. Every other living thing that I ever saw bitten by a rattlesnake seemed to act as if it had been chloroformed. You can hardly see where a snake's fangs enter the flesh and not a drop of blood flows from the wound. Inflammation sets in at once; the breath begins to come hard and short. In animals paralysis soon occurs in the hind parts. The blood leaves the extremities and becomes thin. The heart of any animal that dies from rattlesnake poison will always be found filled with blood in a thin fluid state instead of being coagulated.

"I am a firm believer in whisky as an antidote for rattlesnake poisoning. I have known seven different cases of persons being bitten by rattlers where whisky was administered promptly and liberally, and not one was fatal. Besides the case of the man whom my

snake killed I know of two others where the victims died. They were both treated by doctors, but whisky was not used in either case.

"When any one tells you that a snake's age can be told by the number of its rattles, don't believe it. I've caught snakes two feet long that had more rattles than others twice their size. My pet rattlesnake is eleven years old, and he has fourteen as nice rattles as any snake fancier ever saw, besides a beauty of a button at the end of 'em. It's a very rare case, too, where a rattlesnake gets to be more than four feet long in this latitude."—N. Y. Times.

## SPONGE AND STEEL.

A Fire-Creating Combination Equal to Greasy Rags and Hay.

One of the most curious instances of spontaneous ignition on record is that recently reported by a Chicago manufacturer of plane bits. For some time a sponge had been used for wetting an emery wheel in his shop, bringing water up out of a water-box by capillary attraction, and touching the wheel. It was kept against the wheel lightly by a spring. The wheel was used in grinding very hard steel plates, therefore the sponge constantly wiped particles of steel off the wheel during its revolutions, and it was used in that way until these particles had filled up its cells to a very considerable degree, of course being wet all the time. It was then laid aside, the string being still attached to it together with a little cotton cloth. In time it became entirely dry, lying on and against a couple of pieces of fine wood. After lying unobserved for a week or ten days, it was suddenly discovered one afternoon to be incandescent—in fact, a living coal—and to having set fire both to the board on which it rested and the one against which it leaned. It had burned a considerable portion of the stout twine and the cotton cloth attached to it. All were smoldering, and although flames had not burst forth, they evidently would have done so in a short time, as the room contained a very pungent smell of burning wood. The boards were each burned to a depth of a quarter of an inch and to a width approximately three inches when the incipient conflagration was quenched. The appearance of the charred sponge was not unlike that of a piece of roasted iron ore, which it differed from, however, very decidedly in weight, being quite light. When broken it exhibited the same characteristics throughout, showing that the fine particles of steel had been thoroughly distributed in its interior. This evident case of spontaneous ignition of an article which had not been saturated with grease or oil, but which consisted of a piece of ordinary sponge, filled with fine particles of steel while it was in a wet state, naturally caused much discussion, but a very plausible explanation of its mysterious behavior has been made by the manufacturer himself, as follows: The particles of steel which were wiped off the emery wheel by the sponge must necessarily have been exceedingly fine, as the steel was very hard. Lodging on the sponge in a wet condition and in constant contact with water, oxidation was active—or, in other words, the particles rusted very rapidly. The fine particles of steel presented an extremely great surface area for such action as compared with their bulk. Under ordinary circumstances oxidation does not develop sensible heat, but under the peculiar conditions here realized the usually harmless chemical phenomenon of rusting developed into an actual fire-creating agent, and incandescence resulted. Here was an article which at first sight would seem to be as incapable of spontaneous combustion as an ordinary brick, but which proves to be entitled to rank with greasy rags and oily waste and other well established fire-creating combinations. Had not this burning mass been discovered most auspiciously, a serious conflagration would, in all probability, have ensued, and its cause would have been "unknown."—Fire and Water.

## RESULTS OF DRAINAGE.

The Service Rendered by Water in Its Passage through the Soil.

Water is the principal food of plants, forming as it does from 80 to 95 per cent. of their bulk in a growing state. But like all other food it must be given in moderation and not to excess. A large quantity of water passes through a plant during its period of growth. This is indispensable, as the solid food is carried through the cellular structure of plants by water, which entering by the roots passes through the stem to the leaves where the surplus escapes as vapor into the air. This water contains the solid plant food in solution, and the quantity of water passing through a plant depends very much upon the amount of plant food held in solution. This must be obvious because if the solution is weak and contains a small quantity of food substances a larger quantity of it must pass through the plants to supply the matter needed for their growth. Just as when the maple sap is thin and weak more of it must be boiled down to make a pound of sugar, so when the sap of the soil is thin and more watery the plant must evaporate more of it to procure a pound of solid substance.

It has been found by careful observation that on a poor soil 2,693 pounds of water have passed through the plants to make one pound of wheat grain; that 200 pounds of water is required and used by the plants for every pound of straw and grain together, and that for each pound of mineral plant food taken up by the wheat crop 2,000 pounds of water are evaporated through the leaves. Clover and other broad-leaved plants pass a still larger quantity of water through their foliage. This water exists in the soil, not in a solid state, as in land that is saturated and filled with it, but it must be in an active movable condition and so distributed among the fine particles of the soil and held in suspension by them by capillary attraction, that air can circulate with it and be absorbed by it and dissolved in it and give vitality to it. When the soil is saturated with water air is forced out of it and the roots of plants become sickly for want of air, the leaves turn yellow, and unless relieved and air is supplied the plants speedily die. These facts having been learned and become known, some means of freeing the soil from the excess of water were quickly devised and the practice of drainage was adopted.

Drainage is effected by means of surface channels and pipes laid under the surface. The former is a very inferior method, because it carries off the water as soon as it falls, together with all the plant food it has gathered in its passage through the air, and with whatever it takes up from the surface of the soil as it rushes over it. The water is lost to the soil, a considerable quantity of fertility gathered from the atmosphere, invaluable nitric acid and ammonia is lost with it, and the soil itself is deprived of whatever is soluble and can be washed away. This kind of drainage is evidently a very great waste, and, on the whole, perhaps, leaves the crop worse off than if there were no drains and the water was permitted to percolate slowly through the soil.

Underground drainage, on the other hand, is not only a means of removing the surplus of water which falls upon the land, but it brings to the soil and leaves in it all that is gathered by the rain in its passage through the air, and all that is gathered from the air as the vapors rise from the land and the ocean and float hither and thither, finally forming clouds which bathe freely in the atmosphere and absorb all the ammonia which rises from the decaying matter in the soil or from the myriads of animals and the vast quantity of fuel which is consumed upon the earth, as well as the nitric acid which is formed so freely during every thunderstorm by the action of the lightning upon the air. All this invaluable plant food, amounting, as it is believed, to ten pounds or more upon every acre of the earth's surface, is brought down by the rain and is carried into the soil, and the soil seizes upon it and holds it until the growing crops can make use of it as food. The water, also highly charged with carbonic acid absorbed from the air, exerts a soluble effect upon the soil and dissolves various mineral substances which are needed by the crops and fits them for food for the plants.

The surplus water, indeed, passes down to the drains, carrying some little plant food with it, (but a very small quantity as compared with that which is carried off by the surface drains), and escapes to the streams on its way to its birthplace, the ocean. It may be that it might be caught and held for future and other use; but the farmer has got all he possibly can from it, and the soil is freed from all injurious effects by its retention.

In its passage through the soil and its escape by the drains it (this water) serves another valuable service. It acts, in fact, as a vast air pump, forcing out the stagnant, exhausted air from the soil as it enters, and as it sinks in the soil and enters the drains and flows through them it draws in fresh air loaded with vital energies and active forces, which exert a most beneficial effect upon the land in setting free for the roots a large quantity of valuable food. Thus, a constant circulation of the life-blood of the soil occurs, vitalizing it and enabling it to support a luxuriant growth where before there was sterility and barrenness. Although the air is breathed in by the leaves and enables them to perform a most important function in plant life, yet we can not doubt that a large quantity of air also enters the plants by the roots, and that a large quantity of the carbonaceous and perhaps some of the nitrogenous substances of the crops are thus derived, and if this is so, whatever is thus gained is also due in great measure to the removal of the surplus water by the drains and the results of this removal of the water upon the conditions and we may also say the functions of the soil.—Henry Stewart, in N. Y. Times.

—Mrs. Pompano—"Heard about the row at Bagley's house?" Pompano—"No, what was it? The sheriff?" Mrs. Pompano—"Nonsense! Mr. Bagley kicked out three suitors in one night." Pompano (excitedly)—"Kicked out three! Good heavens, woman, where were you that you didn't catch one of them for Amelia? Another milliner's bill like the last and I'll lasso the first man I meet and make him marry her."—Philadelphia Call.

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